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ABSTRACT

This document consists of the two 1999 issues of a semiannual newsletter that provides current information and research on leadership and administrative issues in early childhood education. The Spring 1999 issue compares elementary schools and child care centers with regard to investments made in the professional development of teachers. The Winter 1999 issue compares professional preparation, professional development opportunities and requirements, and salaries and benefits for elementary school principals and early childhood directors. (KB)

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Research Notes

Published by the Center for Early Childhood Leadership, National-Louis University

SPRING 1999

Investing in Teachers' Professional Development: A Comparison of Elementary Schools and Child Care Centers

The professional development of teachers is a critical component of the nation's effort to improve school quality and student achievement. The importance of in-service training is emphasized in the National Education Goals and the relationship between teachers' level of training and student outcomes has been firmly established in research. Teachers at both the elementary and early childhood levels agree that their teaching significantly improves when they are provided opportunities to reflect on their professional practice.

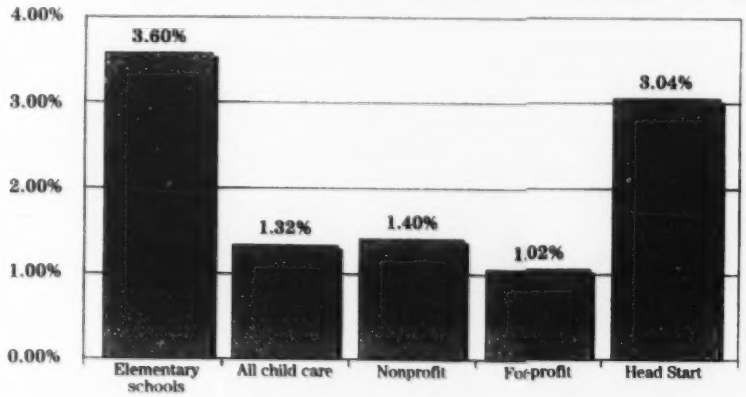
While there may be uniform agreement among educators and policymakers alike about the importance of ongoing professional development, the rhetoric may not be matched by practice. In-service training in many educational settings is still viewed as a luxury, an "add on," rather than an integral part of the educational enterprise. The situation is most critical in the early childhood arena where teachers' professional development is not yet institutionalized.

Recently, the Center for Early Childhood Leadership conducted research to compare the budget allocations for professional development between elementary schools and child care centers. The sample included 150 early childhood programs in Illinois. Seventy-six percent of centers were nonprofit. Average center size was 144 children with 19 staff. The average operating budget of the centers in the sample was $570,283. Comparison data on elementary schools was derived from research conducted by the U.S. Department of Education and the Education Commission of the States. [1,2]

Professional Development as a Budget Priority

As the graph below illustrates, elementary schools spend a larger proportion of their operating budgets on teacher professional development activities than do child care centers. Within the early childhood sector, Head Start programs spend more than twice as much as other nonprofit programs, and almost three times more than for-profit programs.

Proportion of Budget Dedicated to Professional Development



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In actual dollar amounts, an equivalent of 7% of an elementary school teacher's salary is allocated for professional development while an equivalent of only 2% of a child care worker's salary is similarly dedicated. With public school teachers' salaries ranging from $26,315 to $52,813[3] and early childhood teacher salaries in the $13,125 to $18,988 range,[4] the consequences are clear. Child care center staff committed to their own professional development have more out-of-pocket expenses than their public school peers.

Child care teachers spend a higher percentage of their salaries on professional development than their public school peers.

Professional Development Allocations

Center directors were asked how they allocate their professional development funds. The three most common types of professional development were reimbursement for conference fees (77%), staff development resources (e.g., books, journals, videos) (72%), and consultants for staff development training (63%). Estimated dollar amounts in each category ranged widely from $50-$8,100.

Public schools allocate 9% of their professional development funds for college course-work compared to only .3% allocated by child care centers.

Directors indicated their desire to support teachers' continuing education through tuition payments, paid time-off to attend class, and bonuses for teachers who completed coursework. However, only 52% of programs actually allocated money for college coursework, and the average amount was only $100 per teacher annually. In contrast, elementary school teachers are compensated between $300-$800 annually for completing college coursework.

This research highlights a fundamental difference that exists in the early childhood and elementary education systems in this country. Indisputably, investment in the professional development of teachers is critical to improving the quality of services provided to children and families. While the commitment to teachers' professional development may be similar in both arenas, the economic realities of operating a child care center rarely permit the same size investments as in elementary education. Efforts to mend the disparity require a systems approach.

For more information, contact Donna Rafanello, Sr. Research Associate, The Center for Early Childhood Leadership, National-Louis University, (800) 443-5522, ext. 5132.

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Research Notes

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Elementary School Principals and Early Childhood Directors: Same Universe, But Worlds Apart

Meet Judie Lehman, Principal of Betsy Ross Elementary School in Prospect Heights, Illinois, enrollment 343 children. Judie has served in this position for 13 years and supervises approximately 50 full- and part-time teaching and support staff. She is responsible for staff development, supervision, evaluation, instructional leadership, and curriculum design. Her budgetary responsibilities are limited to the purchase of textbooks, instructional materials, and capital outlay. Judie has a master's degree and a General Administrative Endorsement from the state.

Meet Kathy Hardy, Director of McGaw YMCA Child Care in Evanston, Illinois, a position she has held for 3 years. Kathy operates programs for 500 preschool and school-aged children. She manages a budget of $1.9 million and supervises approximately 90 full- and part-time teaching and support staff. Kathy oversees curriculum planning, staff development, supervision, grantwriting, fundraising, and board development. Kathy has a bachelor's degree and is currently working on a master's degree.

Despite similar responsibilities, requirements for professional entry into early childhood administration are not specified or regulated in the same manner as elementary school administration

Judie and Kathy are both school administrators. Both regularly put in a 50-60 hour workweek. The scope of their job responsibilities are similar, yet the qualifications mandated for their positions, the level of training they had prior to assuming their current positions, and the professional status and salaries they enjoy as a school administrator are worlds apart.

Professional Preparation

Although state certification requirements for principals vary, there are some common elements. Virtually all states require teaching certification and classroom teaching experience, a master's degree, and ongoing professional development. Additionally, some states require special education coursework, training beyond a master's degree, and supervisory endorsements.[3] In Illinois, principals are required to hold a Type 75 General Administrative Endorsement that includes graduate-level coursework in school administration, clinical experience, teaching experience, and a certification examination.[4]

In sharp contrast, Day Care Licensing Standards in Illinois only require that directors be 21 years old, have two years of college, and 18 semester hours in child development or equivalent experience.[5] In 22 states, early childhood education training is not required prior to employment. Management coursework is required in only six states. Illinois is one of the states that does not mandate specialized training in the administration of early childhood programs.[6]

Ongoing Professional Development

State requirements vary for the ongoing professional development of principals. In Illinois, for example, certification renewal is required every two years. This process involves completing 6 semester hours (approximately 84 clock hours) of graduate coursework. Principals pay between $30-200 per course. Approximately 80% of principals receive financial assistance from their districts including tuition, conference fees, and travel expenses.

Illinois requires early childhood center directors to complete 15 clock hours of in-service training annually. Licensing standards do not specify the content of this in-service training nor is there a system in place to reimburse directors for their professional development expenses.

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Salaries, Benefits, and Turnover

According to the National Association of Elementary School Principals, 1997-98 principals' salaries averaged $64,653 (based on a ten-month contract).[6] In Illinois, the average principal's salary was $65,091.[5] Principals with more education running larger schools tend to earn more. Turnover for principals averages 4% annually.[7]

In 1997, the average starting annual salary for directors in Illinois ranged from $22,880 to $27,456 (based on a 12-month contract).[8] In general, directors with college degrees earn more than directors with less education. Very few directors earn more than $40,000 annually. In Illinois, the director turnover rate in 1997 was 12%.[8]

In addition to their salaries, elementary school principals receive a full range of benefits including vacation, holiday, and sick leave, health, dental, and life insurance, bonuses, and pension plans.[5] In Illinois, most child care directors receive vacation and holidays (91%) and sick leave (79%); fewer receive health (64%), dental (39%), life insurance (49%), or a pension (40%).[8]

Why the Disparity?

Despite amassing evidence in the research literature about the critical role of early childhood directors in determining program quality, requirements are not specified or regulated in the same manner as professional entry into elementary school administration. These inequities are due in large part to the fact that regulation of child care falls under the auspices of state child welfare agencies while the regulation of children in formal educational settings falls under the purview of state boards of education. These two administrative agencies have historical traditions grounded in two contrasting philosophical orientations. The result is sharply contrasting standards for professional entry and a great disparity in the requirements for leadership positions. Given the increasing complexity of the early childhood director's job, this model is clearly outdated.

Early childhood directors earn less than half the salary of elementary school principals

Elementary school principals and early childhood directors daily perform the same jobs for very different compensation and public recognition. While some progress is being made in elevating the professionalism of early childhood directors through a voluntary system of director credentialing, this is a grassroots effort that is not tied to state standards. Compared to early childhood directors, elementary school principals are afforded the recognition they deserve for the role they play in managing quality schools. Considerable work remains before early childhood administrators are similarly recognized.

For more information, contact Donna Rafanello, Sr. Research Associate, The Center for Early Childhood Leadership, National-Louis University, (800) 443-5522, ext. 5132.

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